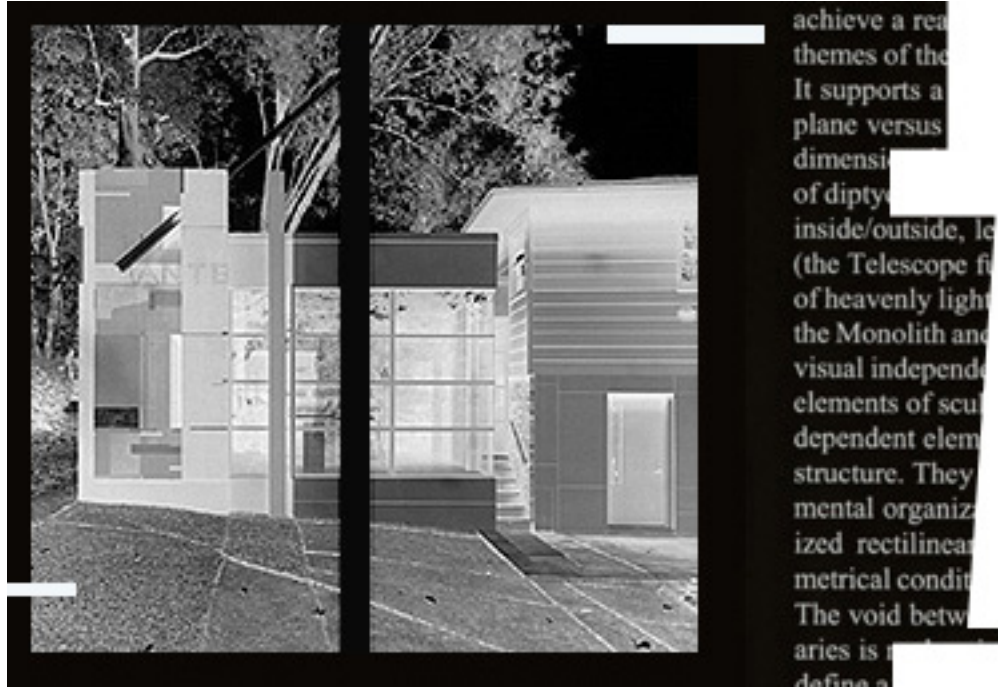


THE ARCHITECT PAINTER VISION QUEST: SIGNIFICANT PLACE. Ultimately, all architectures we call great, let alone those we call serious, answer this question: *How do we make in this world a Significant Place to be?* Because the word *building* derives from an ancient word that means "to be." And a truly Significant Place feels important, influential, or special—because it means something. And so we wonder: How can we construct an enduring dwelling? A shelter from the ordinary and the unbearable? A refuge for contemplation and invention? A precinct of poetry and order? A sanctuary for imagination, study, work and rest? How can we establish foundations—for a paradise regained? How can we structure the solid and the void of human existence, the visible and the invisible, make manifest the ardent will to form and the relentless demand to mean, and realize the presence of transcendent architectures that illumine the mind and move the heart, that uplift the eyes and stir the soul? How can we make of building art? How can we make an architecture that reflects the architecture of our being? An architecture that gives outer expression to

the ontology of our inner vision? How can we disclose the true form of the edifice of the world . . . through exquisite reflections of beauty and intelligence in habitable form? Architecture presents limitless possibilities for expression of Significant Form and Significant Space: Significant Place.

INTRODUCTION: COLLAGE READING: BRAQUE | PICASSO



My essay "Collage Reading: Braque | Picasso" probes Synthetic Cubism, which began in **1912** with the invention of collage. I presented the essay at 1996 Annual Meeting of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture. My research focused on basic questions: **What is Synthetic Cubism?** What can it teach architects about design? What lessons can we mine from the collages of Braque and Picasso, as well as Juan Gris, about form and space?

For several years, I taught a graduate seminar on Cubism. The course charted the emergence of **abstraction in art**. Starting with crucial early 19th-century events, the course connected the dots to Cezanne to Analytical Cubism (1908-1911) to Synthetic Cubism (1912-1914) to Post-Cubism. I emphasized Picasso's 1907 watershed painting, *Les Femmes d'Alger*, which I turned into an essay, [PICASSO LESSONS: The Sixth Woman of Les Femmes d'Alger](#). I also emphasized the problem of Formalism (see my articles [Formalism: Move + Meaning \[1\]](#) and [Formalism: Move | Meaning \[2\]](#)). My essays, paintings and buildings—all my work—spring from this Cubism-centered fountainhead.

I build on the research of others. At the top of the list: John Golding's classic book, *Cubism: A History and Analysis 1907-1914*; Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky's research into the relationship between modern architecture and Analytical Cubist painting, which they highlighted in their seminal essay, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal" (*Perspecta* 8, The Yale Architectural Journal, 1964); and Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter's examination of the solid/void dialectic (the **co-dependence of form and space**) in their 1984 book, *Collage City*. See especially the chapter, "Crisis of the Object: Predicament of Texture," pp. 50-85. That chapter revealed a core principle, which my study of Synthetic Cubism helped me to crystalize. Let me frame this principle as a question: **To what degree has an architect produced a design in which form functions not only as space-occupier, but also as space-definer?** And that question lurks in the background of my essay, "Collage Reading" —and in the background, if not the foreground, of almost everything I've since [written](#) and [designed](#), including the simple solid-void space-making collage above.

When I reread "Collage Reading" recently, I realized that it could be tough for readers to size up the degree to which my essay offers original insights. So in a nutshell:

1. Picasso's first collage (*the* first collage), which I discuss in my essay, is perhaps familiar to certain architects and architectural scholars--it appears as the frontispiece to Rowe and Koetter's *Collage City*. But Braque's first pasted-paper collage, to which I compare Picasso's first collage, is unlikely to strike a chord of recognition in architectural spheres outside of my seminar. This isn't surprising, since the study of the history of modern painting, let alone specifically collage, isn't part of the normal undergraduate and graduate architecture curriculum. I'm by no means the first to recognize the importance of Picasso's and Braque's first collages. My awareness and appreciation of them derives, in point of fact, from the work of scholars of the history of Cubism, such as John Golding. But as far as I know, **"Collage Reading" is the first essay by an architect that explicitly analyzes Picasso's first collage and Braque's first collage and probes their contrasting design principles.**
2. My comments alluding to Le Corbusier's relationship to Cézanne are equally original, I believe, a connection I hope to pursue in another article at some point.

"Collage Reading: Braque | Picasso" forshadows other essays where I focus on what I term **SIGNIFICANT SPACE: the product of a design in which FORM functions not only as SPACE-OCCUPIER, but also as SPACE-DEFINER**. I believe I'm **the first to see Significant Space operating at the very heart of Synthetic Cubism**—at least the Braque brand that I dissect in "Collage Reading." See related essays: [7 LESSONS OF PAINTING FOR ARCHITECTURE](#), [EMPTY SPACE / FULL SPACE](#), and [SIGNIFICANT SPACE](#).

JEF7REY HILDNER (aka Madison Gray, Eliot Plum, and Henry Trucks) is an architect, a painter, and a writer. Author of [Garches 1234](#), [Picasso Lessons](#), [Daedalus 9](#), and [Henry Trucks—Painter](#), his award-winning work and his essays on the theory and practice of art appear in a wide range of publications, including [Global Architecture Houses](#), [Journal of Architectural Education](#), and the book [Architectural Formalism](#), which features his essay “[Formalism: Move | Meaning](#)” alongside essays by theorists Rosalind Krauss, Peggy Deamer, Robert Slutzky, and Colin Rowe. Hildner focuses on [Formalism](#) in his forthcoming book *Visual Effects*, the title of his presentation at the 2016 Syracuse University Florence Architecture Program symposium, "[The F Word](#)." He earned his undergraduate and graduate degrees from Princeton University.

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Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, *Annual Proceedings 84*, 1996, pp. 181-87 | [COLLAGEREADING](#)
Photo upper left: [DANTE|TELESCOPE HOUSE](#) by JEF7REY HILDNER. HOUSE ADDITION FOR DAVE ZLOWE, SILVER SPRING, MD, 1997

JEF7REY HILDNER [THE ARCHITECT PAINTER](#) | 2001